United Nations

Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ General Assembly President says UNRWA assistance is vital to Palestinian people in transition period following PLO-Israel accords; appeals for international financial support, citing shortfall in contributions to Agency last year.

+ Department of Humanitarian Affairs launches inter-agency appeal on behalf of 250,000 people in war-torn Georgia; seeks $20 million to cover needs from 1 December to 31 May 1994.

+ Citing progress which could lead to implementation of United Nations peace-keeping plan for Croatia, Secretary-General says Security Council should not reconsider UNPROFOR mandate at this time.

+ General Assembly establishes open-ended Working Group to consider question of representation on and membership of Security Council; first meeting to be convened towards end of January 1994.

+ International Day of Disabled Persons observed today; focus this year on creation of society in which all citizens, regardless of levels of ability, can claim rights and exercise responsibilities.

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General Assembly President Samuel Insanally (Guyana) said today that despite the hope created by the accords between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel, the humanitarian assistance provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was still needed. The United Nations would have a significant role to play in supporting the accords and in assisting the Palestinians in the transition to self-rule, he told the Ad Hoc Committee for the announcement of voluntary contributions to UNRWA. It was essential, therefore, that UNRWA's services continue without interruption at existing or enhanced levels.

UNRWA had already identified projects and programmes which would build confidence, create employment and improve the daily lives of people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Mr. Insanally continued. He noted that whatever

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the situation in those areas, there were also more than 1.7 million refugees living outside the occupied territories, in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

For 1994, UNRWA had presented budget proposals totalling some $294 million to the General Assembly, he said. A shortfall in contributions last year had resulted in an austerity programme which had cut the budget deficit to some $4 million. However, such measures could not be sustained without a serious deterioration in UNRWA's services. International financial support for United Nations programmes for the Palestinian people was needed now more than ever, and pledges made in the Committee would be a significant gesture for peace.

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A United Nations inter-agency consolidated appeal was launched today by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) to meet the emergency needs of 250,000 people in war-torn Georgia, including 150,000 displaced people and returnees. These are in addition to the 100,000 who escaped some time ago from conflict areas in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and who still require urgent humanitarian assistance. The new appeal supersedes the one launched in March 1993 and focuses on emergency requirements from 1 December 1993 to 31 May 1994, the costs of which are estimated at $20 million.

In September/October 1993, civil war in Abkhazia forced part of the population, mainly Georgian families, to flee, crossing the mountains in hazardous conditions. On 6 October, DHA issued a special emergency appeal for $2.8 million to cover their immediate relief needs. That appeal was fully met and thousands of people left the mountains. But according to the Department, further urgent requirements have arisen as a result of the impending winter and the increase in the number of displaced people.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has said that various initiatives are underway with the cooperation of the two sides in the Croatian conflict which could lead to implementation of the United Nations peace-keeping plan for the Republic. Consequently, the Secretary-General said in a report dated 1 November, he would not recommend that the Security Council reconsider the mandate of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) at this time. However, he warned that the two sides had to work harder to achieve a cease-fire agreement, better economic cooperation and a political settlement if the international community was to sustain its peacemaking and peace-keeping commitment in Croatia. He appealed to them to extend their cooperation to UNPROFOR as it sought to improve conditions in the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs).

The Secretary-General noted that talks aimed at a cease-fire in and around the UNPAs were continuing within the framework of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia. It was also hoped that talks would lead to economic confidence-building measures. He also noted that UNPROPOR had

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initiated meetings between the two sides' military commanders in all sectors, and was increasingly active in identifying humanitarian needs and in assisting humanitarian deliveries.

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The General Assembly today established an open-ended Working Group to consider the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council, as well as others matters related to the Council. Acting without a vote, the Assembly requested that the Working Group report on the progress of its work before the end of the forty-eighth session.

General Assembly President S.R. Insanally (Guyana) said he would convene the Working Group's first meeting towards the end of January 1994. The Group would consider the views of Member States on the subject, as expressed in the plenary or in their written replies to the Secretary-General.

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The International Day of Disabled Persons was observed today at the national and international level, the second observance of the Day as proclaimed by the General Assembly at the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-1992). It falls on the anniversary of the adoption in 1982 of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the focus this year is on creating a society where all people, regardless of their level of ability, have an equal chance to contribute and to claim their rights and exercise their responsibilities. The approach emphasizes ability rather than disability, and integration as opposed to segregation.

The General Assembly is expected this month to adopt a set of standard rules aimed at equalizing opportunity for for people with disabilities. The rules would provide Governments with policy options and ideas for the mechanisms necessary to create a society in which all its citizens can participate.

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